

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00  
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05  
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05  
/064 W

-----141312Z 022991 /43

O P 141130Z MAR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 311  
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY  
AOWHBASYI KABUL PRIORITY 6560  
AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY  
AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY  
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2438

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PK, PINT  
SUBJ: POST-ELECTION MANEUVERING - BHUTTO TAKES THE INITIATIVE

REF: ISLAMABAD 2395

SUMMARY: BHUTTO IS FACED WITH GROWING POPULAR PERCEPTION  
HE ENGAGED IN MASSIVE TAMPERING TO ENSURE MARCH 7 ELECTION  
VICTORY. WE CONTINUE TO RECEIVE REPORTS SUPPORTING THIS  
VIEW. IN ATTEMPT TO COUNTER THE CONTENTION HIS MANDATE  
IS SERIOUSLY FLAWED, THE PM HAS EMBARKED ON OFFENSIVE  
HIGHLIGHTED BY ADDRESS TO NATION MARCH 12. IN CONCILIATORY  
SPEECH HE IMPLICITLY HELD OUT HOPE OF HOLDING PROVINCIAL  
ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS AGAIN AND, THROUGH APPEALS TO ELECTION  
COMMISSION, ALLOWING THE PNA TO INCREASE ITS REPRESENTATION  
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IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. HE HAS ALSO SENT LETTER TO PNA LEADER  
MUFTI MAHMUD OFFERING "UNCONDITIONAL" TALKS.

THE PNA HAS CALLED FOR ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROCESSIONS,  
CENTERED IN FIVE MAJOR CITIES. THE OPPOSITION LEADERSHIP  
CLAIMS THEY WILL BE SMALL, COMPLETELY NON-VIOLENT AND  
RESTRAINED. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE PNA WILL TURN DOWN

THE PM'S OFFER TO HOLD TALKS AND WILL CONTINUE WITH THEIR CAUTIOUS AND DELIBERATE STRATEGY OF TESTING THE WATERS AND DETERMINING THE EXTENT OF POPULAR DISSATISFACTION WITH BHUTTO. END SUMMARY.

1. THE PRIME MINISTER IS FACED WITH A GROWING POPULAR PERCEPTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT ENGAGED IN MASSIVE TAMPERING TO ENSURE A SWEEPING PPP VICTORY IN MARCH 7 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. CONGENS LAHORE AND KARACHI REPORT INCREASING EVIDENCE THAT THE GOP USED VARIOUS TACTICS TO ENSURE AN OVERWHELMING PPP VICTORY, ESPECIALLY IN THE PUNJAB. WE CONTINUE TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM NUMEROUS SOURCES OF BALLOT BOX STUFFING, MISREPORTING OF TALLIES AND VOTER INTIMIDATION IN MANY DISTRICTS. CONGEN LAHORE REPORTS THAT EVEN SOME PPP OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED DISTASTE WITH THE ELECTION OUTCOME ANUYDLAXJQUOUS RIGGING THAT OCCURRED. LAHORE ADDS THAT FOR SOME OBSERVERS THE QUESTION IS NO LONGER WHO REALLY WON THE ELECTION BUT RATHER HOW TO REACT TO THE HEAVY-HANDED MANIPULATION BY THE RULING PARTY. A SENIOR CIVIL SERVANT HAS TOLD US HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE SEEN CONSIDERABLE PROOF OF MASSIVE RIGGING AND ARE NOW CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE GOVERNMENT ACTIONS AGAINST THOSE CIVIL SERVANTS WHO DID NOT ACTIVELY SUPPORT THE PPP EFFORT.

2. IN OBVIOUS ATTEMPT TO COUNTER THE INCREASINGLY HELD VIEW THAT HIS NEW MANDATE IS SERIOUSLY FLAWED, THE PM MADE A NATION-WIDE TELEVISION AND RADIO ADDRESS EVENING MARCH 12. IN A GENERALLY CONCILIATORY, MILD, CONTROLLED AND POLITICALLY ASTUTE SPEECH, THE PM NOTED HE WAS ALWAYS READY FOR A DIALOGUE  
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WITH THE OPPOSITION. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT EXCEPT FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, WHICH WERE A SETTLED MATTER, HE WAS READY TO DISCUSS "OTHER THINGS" AND FIND REMEDIES. SPEECH CONTAINED USUAL WARNING THAT OPPOSITION SHOULD NOT ENGAGE IN VIOLENCE SINCE "IF YOU WANT TO USE FORCE AND UNCONSTITUTIONAL MEANS, IT WOULD BE A WRONG POLITICAL DECISION," AND WOULD BE CRUSHED BY THE GOVERNMENT. AFTER RECOUNTING IN DETAIL EXAMPLES OF HIS ALLEGIANCE TO DEMOCRACY AS SHOWN IN HIS LONG POLITICAL CAREER, THE PM SUGGESTED THAT ELECTION MALPRACTICES WOULD BE REMEDIED THROUGH THE NORMAL CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS AND THROUGH APPEALS TO THE ELECTION COMMISSION. DURING WEEKEND PRESS CONFERENCE, THE CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER, IN CONCILIATORY GESTURE, NOTED HE HAD SUGGESTED TO PM - WHO SEEMED RECEPTIVE TO PROPOSAL - THAT ELECTION COMMISSION BE ALLOWED TO REVIEW ELECTION CASES A ILE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IS IN SESSION. NORMALLY, ANY PROCEEDING INVOLVING A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MEMBER WOULD HAVE TO BE POSTPONED UNTIL ASSEMBLY IS ADJOURNED.

3. PM CONTINUED HIS OFFENSIVE WITH MARCH 13 LETTER TO MUFTI MAHMUD WHICH OFFERED "UNCONDITIONAL" TALKS WITH OPPOSITION. HE SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE AN "OPEN AND SINCERE" DIALOGUE WITH THE OPPOSITION AND THAT HE IS WILLING TO DISCUSS "ANY GRIEVANCES THAT THEY MAY HAVE." GOVERNMENT AT SAME TIME EXHIBITED IRON FIST IN VELVET GLOVE BY HAVING SEVERAL HUNDRED LOWER LEVEL PNA WORKERS PICKED UP AND DETAINED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. WE BELIEVE THEY WILL BE HELD FOR SEVERAL DAYS BOTH TO DISRUPT PNA PLANS AND TO GIVE A WARNING TO PNA WORKERS.

4. POPULAR CONSENSUS IS THAT BHUTTO HAS IMPLICITLY, BOTH IN SPEECH AND LETTER TO MUFTI, MADE TWO SPECIFIC OFFERS TO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2438

CINCPAC FOR POLAND

PNA. IF THEY ARE WILLING TO TALK DIRECTLY WITH HIM, HE WOULD BE WILLING TO CALL FOR NEW PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, AND WOULD ALSO BE WILLING TO ALLOW MORE PNA MEMBERS TO SIT IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. FIRST CONCLUSION IS BASED ON PM'S OFFER TO DISCUSS ANY ISSUES, EXCEPT FOR RESULTS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, AND HIS POINTED

OMISSION OF PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS WHILE REPEATEDLY NOTING THAT THE NA POLLS COULD NOT BE HELD AGAIN. SECOND CONCLUSION IS BASED ON PM'S SUGGESTION THAT PNA APPEAL TO ELECTION COMMISSION - "FOR AS MANY AS THIRTY, FORTY SEATS" - AND EC WILL DECIDE IF THEIR APPEALS HAVE STANDING.

5. WE BELIEVE THE INITIAL PUBLIC REACTION TO BHUTTO'S SPEECH AND LETTER IS GENERALLY POSITIVE. THE PM HAS PROJECTED IMAGE OF A MAN OF REASON WILLING TO DISCUSS ALL ISSUES WITH HIS  
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OPPONENTS. THE TWO LEADING VERNACULAR PAPERS - NAWA-I-WAQT WHICH WAS SYMPATHETIC TO THE OPPOSITION DURING THE CAMPAIGN AND JANG WHICH COVERED THE CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVELY AND IN DETAIL - HAVE EDITORIALY ENCOURAGED THE PNA TO ACCEPT THE PM'S OFFER TO HOLD DISCUSSIONS.

6. THE PNA HAS BEGUN TO RESPOND TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFENSIVE. THE OPPOSITION, IN A MEETING THIS PAST WEEKEND IN LAHORE, ISSUED FOUR DEMANDS NOTED IN REFTEL. THE PNA IS BEING VERY CAUTIOUS, HOWEVER, AND HAS NOT CALLED FOR A MASS MOVEMENT TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO NAWA-I-WAQT, THE PNA IS CENTERING ITS PROCESSION ACTIVITIES IN ONLY FIVE CITIES, KARACHI, HYDERABAD, LAHORE, PESHAWAR AND RAWALPINDI. ASGHAR KHAN HAS CALLED ON HIS FOLLOWERS TO "EXERCISE RESTRAINT" AND HAS TOLD THE PRESS THAT "WE ARE NOT COURTING ARREST. WE ARE EXERCISING OUR RIGHTS IN A SPIRIT DEVOID OF VIOLENCE." THE OPPOSITION HAS ALSO REPEATEDLY DECIDED IT WILL LIMIT THE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE IN ITS PROCESSIONS; ASGHAR KHAN PUBLICLY CONTENDED ONLY HIMSELF AND FIVE OTHER PNA LEADERS WILL BE IN THE LAHORE PROCESSION AND ADDED THE PNA WILL ATTEMPT TO AVOID HAVING OTHERS PARTICIPATE. KARACHI PROCESSION LEADER NDP CHIEF SHERBAZ MAZARI HAS INDICATED, HOWEVER, THE MARCH IN KARACHI WOULD BE MUCH LARGER. THE PNA WILL BEGIN THE MARCHES AFTER AFTERNOON PRAYERS ON THE 14TH. BOTH MUFTI MAHMUD AND BEGUM WALI KHAN HAVE ASKED FOR EQUAL TIME ON RADIO AND TELEVISION TO RESPOND TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH. PAKISTAN PRESS, INCLUDING GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED PAPERS, CONTINUE TO GIVE SURPRISINGLY COMPLETE AND ACCURATE COVERAGE TO OPPOSITION STATEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES AND HAVE NOT YET RETURNED TO PRE-CAMPAIGN PRACTICE OF NEARLY TOTAL BLACKOUT OF OPPOSITION NEWS.

7. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE PNA WILL TURN DOWN THE PM'S OFFER TO HOLD TALKS. ASGHAR KHAN HAS SAID THAT THE OPPOSITION IS NOT INTERESTED IN GETTING FOUR OR FIVE MORE NA SEATS OR FORMING A PROVINCIAL MINISTRY - IT HAS TAKEN AN IRREVOCABLE  
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STAND. THE OPPOSITION FEELS IT HAS BEEN BADLY BURNED WHEN IT HAD DISCUSSIONS WITH BHUTTO IN THE PAST AND WAS EITHER OUT-MANEUVERED BY THE WILY PRIME MINISTER OR BHUTTO RENEGED ON HIS PROMISES TO THEM. THE PRIME MINISTER IS ONCE AGAIN, HOWEVER, SHOWING HIS POLITICAL ACUMEN AND THROUGH HIS SPEECH AND LETTER HAS, FOR THE MOMENT, PUT THE OPPOSITION ON THE DEFENSIVE. THE PNA HAS CHOSEN A CAUTIOUS, DELIBERATE STRATEGY AS A WAY OF TESTING THE WATERS, GAUGING THE EXTENT OF DISSATISFACTION WITH THE PM, AND DETERMINING THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE PUBLIC IS WILLING TO PARTICIPATE. BUILDING ON ITS ABILITY TO DISRUPT KARACHI, AND DISSATISFACTION AND UNREST IN THE FRONTIER (WE CONTINUE TO HEAR REPORTS OF LAW AND ORDER DIFFICULTIES IN CERTAIN AREAS OF THE FRONTIER PROVINCE) THE PNA PROBABLY HOPES TO START WITH SMALL VIOLATIONS OF SECTION 144 AND EVENTUALLY BUILD - IF ENOUGH PUBLIC SUPPORT IS GARNERED - TO MASSIVE PUBLIC ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS. THIS STRATEGY WILL NOT LEAD TO BHUTTO'S DOWNFALL IN THE NEXT SEVERAL DAYS; SEVERAL WEEKS MUST PASS BEFORE A FINAL JUDGMENT ON ITS EFFICACY CAN BE MADE. IF THE PRIME MINISTER IS ABLE TO WEATHER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, HOWEVER, AND HIS POLITICAL ABILITIES TO DO SO SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED, HIS POSITION FOR THE MID-TERM SEEMS FAIRLY SECURE.

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## Message Attributes

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